

## 5. ON A COLLECTION OF BIRDS FROM CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.

BY JOHN GOULD, F.R.S., ETC.

The Board of Governors of the South Australian Institute having liberally forwarded for my inspection a selection from the ornithological collection made by Mr. Frederick G. Waterhouse during Mr. Stuart's late Exploratory Expedition into Central Australia, I have thought the matter of sufficient interest to bring these birds under the notice of the Society, the more so as it will enable me to make known through our 'Proceedings' a new and very beautiful species of Parrakeet pertaining to the genus *Polyteles*, of which only two have been hitherto known. Every ornithologist must be acquainted with the elegant *P. melanurus* and *P. barrabandi*, and I feel assured that the acquisition of an additional species of this lovely form will be hailed with pleasure. The specific appellation I would propose for this novelty is *alexandræ*, in honour of that Princess who, we may reasonably hope, is destined at some future time to be the queen of these realms and their dependencies, of which Australia is by no means the most inconspicuous.

## POLYTELES ALEXANDRÆ, sp. nov.

Forehead delicate light blue; lower part of the cheeks, chin, and throat rose-pink; head, nape, mantle, back, and scapularies olive-green; lower part of the back and rump blue, of a somewhat deeper tint than that of the crown; shoulders and wing-coverts pale yellowish green; spurious wing bluish green; external webs of the principal primaries dull blue, narrowly edged with greenish yellow, the remaining primaries olive-green, edged with greenish yellow; under wing-coverts verditer-green; breast and abdomen olive-grey, tinged with vinous; thighs rosy red; upper tail-coverts olive, tinged with blue; two centre tail-feathers bluish olive-green; the two next on each side olive-green on their outer webs and dark brown on the inner ones; the remaining tail-feathers tricoloured, the central portion being black, the outer olive-grey, and the inner deep rosy red; under tail-coverts olive; bill coral-red; feet mealy brown.

Total length 14 inches; bill  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; wing 7; tail 9; tarsi  $\frac{7}{8}$ .

*Habitat.* Howell's Ponds, Central Australia,  $16^{\circ} 54' 7''$  S. l.

*Remark.*—This is in every respect a typical *Polyteles*, having the delicate bill and elegantly striped tail characteristic of that form. It is of the same size as *P. barrabandi*, but differs from that species in having the crown blue and the lower part of the cheeks rose-pink instead of yellow.

The following is a list of the other species of birds comprised in the collection:—

*Trichoglossus rubritorquis.* Rare.

*Aprosmictus erythropterus.*

*Platycercus brownii.* Rare.

*Struthidea cinerea.*

*Climacteris melanura.*

- Pomatorhinus rubecula.* Rare.  
*Cincloramphus cruralis.*  
*Artamus leucopygialis.*  
 — *cinereus.* Rare.  
*Colluricincla brunnea.*  
*Petroica bicolor.*  
*Pardalotus rubricatus.* Extremely rare; the second specimen seen.  
*Graucalus melanops.*  
*Tropidorhynchus argenteiceps.*  
*Geopelia cuneata.*  
 — *humeralis.*  
*Erythrogonys cinctus.*

6. NOTES ON THE METHOD OF INCUBATION AMONG THE BIRDS  
 IN THE ORDER STRUTHIONES. BY P. L. SCLATER, M.A.,  
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The phenomena of reproduction in the two families *Struthionidæ* and *Apterygidæ*, which compose the order Struthiones, as far as we are acquainted with them, appear to be very distinct. In the *Struthionidæ* the females deposit numerous eggs. These are collected together by the male, who takes the whole duty of incubation upon himself, and likewise tends and looks after the young birds when hatched. In the *Apterygidæ* it would appear that the female deposits but one single egg, and sits upon it herself. This I judge to be the case from the following evidence, which is all I have been able to collect upon the subject:—

1. The Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*).

I shall not repeat the numerous stories that are universally current respecting the reproduction of the Ostrich. It is generally supposed to lay its eggs in the desert, and to leave them to be hatched by the heat of the sun; and this belief appears to have been current ever since the Book of Job (one of the earliest of the Holy Scriptures) was written. But we know now with certainty, from the observations\* of M. Noel Suchet, Director of the Zoological Gardens at Marseilles, that the normal habits of the Ostrich on this point do not differ materially from those of its allies of the same family. In March 1861 a pair of Ostriches were placed in a quiet enclosure near Marseilles for the purpose of inducing them to breed. Fifteen eggs were deposited by the female, in an excavation made in the sand by the two birds working alternately, at intervals of two days each, the number being complete on April 20th. The male then took up his position on the eggs, and the young birds were hatched on the 3rd of June, being forty-five days after incubation had commenced. This, however, would appear to have been before the expiration of the usual period of incubation, which, according to the observations of M. Hardy of Algiers, lasts usually from fifty-six to sixty days.

\* See Rev. Zool. 1861, p. 467, and Bull. Soc. Accl. 1861, p. 142.